



# Speech from the **Throne**



At the Opening of the  
Second Session of the  
40<sup>th</sup> Legislature

**November 19, 2012**

**Delivered by:**

**The Honourable Richard J. Scott**

Chief Justice of the  
Province of Manitoba



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Welcome to the opening of the 2nd session of the 40th Legislature.

We meet at a time of real economic uncertainty. The global recovery after the financial crash of 2008 remains halting and fragile, imperilled by debt crises in Europe and weak growth in the US.

Manitoba has successfully weathered the challenges of recent years, demonstrating the resiliency of our innovators and our labour force. As government, we have played our part by taking a balanced approach and investing in people and infrastructure.

When the 2008 global financial crisis hit, some said we should absorb the full effects of the downturn all at once, by dramatically cutting services. We made a different choice.

We put families first by protecting the jobs and services they count on.

Our investments helped create 29,000 jobs, most of which were in the private sector. *Macleans* magazine referred to our success as the "Manitoba miracle."

Last year saw a crisis much closer to home, in the form of record flood waters. As Manitobans, we faced this challenge together. Our government supported families and communities as they dealt with the flood, and we remain committed to working with Manitobans to rebuild flood-damaged areas.

Our responses to these challenges highlight the Manitoba way of doing things: we work together and we take care of each other in times of need.

The flood cost over \$1 billion. And we are dealing with other cost pressures in health care, child welfare and public safety. Dealing with such costs responsibly is part of our job as government.

Our plan to move Manitoba forward through these uncertain times is balanced, moderate, and forward-looking. Now is not the time for a dramatic expansion of the public sector, nor for reckless cuts to key services. Rather it is a time to protect core services while making targeted, strategic investments to support opportunities and economic growth.



This year, our government took steps to redirect spending away from administration and toward frontline services. We amalgamated Regional Health Authorities, merged two Crown corporations into one, and launched a process to reduce the number of government agencies, boards and commissions. That process of streamlining and reducing duplication continues.

- We will reduce the size of Manitoba's public service by 600 over three years.
- We will consolidate government offices where opportunities exist to reduce costs and modernize services.
- And we will adopt best practices to reduce procurement costs across government.

Manitoba's economic fundamentals are strong. We can see this is true because businesses are hiring. This year, Manitoba's private employment has grown faster than the national average.

Families are expressing their confidence in our province by building and renovating homes. Housing starts this year have increased at more than double the national rate.

Over the last seven years, labour productivity in Manitoba has grown faster than in any other province, and more than double the national average. This showcases the effective partnership between business, labour, educational institutions, and government in Manitoba.

Manitobans benefit from our resilient, diversified and growing economy, with strengths in traditional sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing, as well as in aerospace, information and communications technology, and cultural industries.

After years of rebuilding health care from the damage done to it in the 1990s, Manitoba families can count on a strong, stable, and innovative system with more options than ever to get the care they need faster, more conveniently, and closer to home.

Young people are receiving education and training for the jobs of tomorrow, and a strong, publicly owned Manitoba Hydro is powering opportunities across the province.



Manitoba offers a good life in a great place, with affordable housing, liveable cities, quality schools and growing diversity across the province. Cottages and camping opportunities, vibrant culture and community festivals, and world-class amenities are all within reach for Manitoba families.

As Manitobans, we are quietly proud of our extraordinary province. Soon we will have more opportunities to show off Manitoba to the world. Over the past decade, our government has made investments that are helping to create a critical mass of signature attractions. Now we prepare to welcome the world to Manitoba.

## **Health**

Health care remains the top priority for our government, just as it remains the top priority for Manitoba families. We have worked hard to stabilize and rebuild our system since 1999. Over that period, wait times have decreased and Manitoba has gained 500 more doctors and over 3,100 more nurses.

We now turn to the health care challenges of the future.

In Manitoba, as elsewhere in Canada, people are living longer and in their later years, more are living with chronic disease. This is a challenge for individuals, for families and for our health care system. With the number of older Manitobans expected to double over the next 25 years, there will be added pressure on health services and health costs.

Health funding is a shared responsibility between the provincial and federal governments, but the federal contribution has fallen from 50 per cent three decades ago to 20 per cent today. And the federal government has announced plans to reduce its share of health funding further, to just 11 per cent of total costs.

These long-term challenges can only be addressed through a long-term strategy.

This year, we cut the number of RHAs from 11 to 5, saving millions of dollars that are being reallocated to support the front lines of care.



Productivity is being improved by using LEAN management and other tools that allow us to offer better care at a lower cost.

In the coming months we will introduce a five-year sustainability plan, designed to secure the foundations of universal health care in Manitoba. The plan builds on our current strategy of providing better health services, promoting healthy living and disease prevention, and reducing the growth in health costs.

The provincial health budget for the current year is projected to increase at half the rate it has over the past 12 years. We know we need to continue to bend the cost curve for health care, to ensure that core services are sustainable into the future.

At the same time, new investments will be made to help prevent illness and support Manitobans' efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

A cornerstone of our plan to provide better health services more efficiently is our commitment to ensure all Manitobans have access to a family doctor by 2015. We have already seen progress toward this goal, and this progress will continue:

- We will increase medical residencies to train more family doctors;
- We will fund new front-line positions – such as nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses and dieticians - for medical practices that agree to take on more patients.
- We will open more QuickCare clinics, ACCESS Centres, and mobile clinics to give people faster access to care closer to home, while reducing unnecessary visits to hospital emergency rooms.

We are working to make sure seniors have options about where to live that are most appropriate for them and their families.

We already have the best home care system in Canada, and this year we will introduce innovations to make home care in Manitoba even better. We will also build on the personal care home and supportive housing units already under development by detailing plans for 200 more PCH beds in Winnipeg.



Earlier this year, we launched the Home Cancer Drug Plan to ensure all approved cancer treatment and support drugs are fully covered, with no deductible, regardless of whether patients access them in hospital or at home. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, this is the most compassionate and comprehensive model for cancer drug coverage in the country. Already, over 5,600 Manitobans have saved \$3.5 million this year.

Manitoba's first CancerCare hub was opened in Morden/Winkler last year. Over the next year, more will be created as part of a plan to transform all 16 rural chemotherapy centres into full CancerCare hubs, offering better, coordinated services to support patients as they receive testing and care.

In the months ahead, we will launch the Manitoba Healthy Workplace Campaign in partnership with business, labour and community partners to help employers make changes that will make it easier for workers to live healthier lives.

We will step up our efforts to help Manitobans quit smoking and ensure fewer young people take up the habit.

Ensuring swift response in a medical emergency is critical. A new post-secondary Advanced Care Paramedic training program is being developed; in the meantime we are providing funding to the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service to expand their advanced training to paramedics in rural communities.

### **Jobs, Training and Opportunities**

Manitoba's population is growing and getting younger. For the third year in a row, our population grew faster than the national average. Over the last three years, almost 30,000 more people came to Manitoba than left to live elsewhere – a level never seen before in modern times.

Still, we cannot rest on our past successes. We will not have enough skilled workers to realize our full potential for economic growth without continued coordinated investment in skills development, education and immigration.

This is especially true because of our low unemployment rate, which is currently third lowest in Canada. This statistic illustrates the opportunities available to Manitoba. It also reminds us that if we were to move away from



our successful strategy of investing in people, a shortage of available workers would squander economic growth.

This is why we are setting an ambitious target of adding 75,000 more workers to our labour force by 2020.

We have the potential to meet this goal. Manitoba's share of our population aged 15 to 24 is the largest out of all the provinces. If we act boldly now to get this cohort of young adults the skills they need to meet the demands of the labour market, they will power Manitoba's economic expansion for a generation.

We know that meeting our target will require drawing on the full range of potential workers, including students graduating, more Aboriginal workers, and newcomers arriving through immigration.

In the coming year, the Premier's Economic Advisory Council will convene a Skills Summit. The mandate of the summit will be to offer advice on how to meet our target of 75,000 more workers by 2020, to ensure Manitoba firms have access to the workers they need when they need them, and to connect Manitobans with jobs.

This will contribute to a virtuous cycle: more good jobs for Manitobans mean more young families will choose to build their futures here, which in turn helps support a strong labour force well into the future.

The Skills Summit will focus on four themes:

1. Excellence in education to ensure young people are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow;
2. Apprenticeships and training to connect Manitobans with jobs in the trades and keep building our province;
3. First Nations and Metis labour force development for these growing populations; and
4. Growing our successful immigration strategy.



Immigration and skilled labour are central to our economic development strategy. Attracting more international students supports both of these.

In the year ahead, we will take steps to support international students, and coordinate efforts by all Manitoba universities and colleges to promote Manitoba as a destination.

Our universities and colleges help drive our economy and our quality of life. Our government has worked hard to help redevelop and enhance campuses.

At the University of Manitoba, Project Domino nears a successful completion. The U of M Healthy Living Centre will open in 2015. And Winnipeg's new world-class football stadium, Investors Group Field, anchors the burgeoning development around the U of M, including the historical redevelopment of the former Southwood Golf Course for mixed use.

The new University of Winnipeg fieldhouse will be a valuable asset not just for the university but for the larger community. This is in keeping with the way the U of W has steadily broken down barriers between the university and its neighbouring communities in recent years.

This year, we will take a major step in the expansion of Red River College, investing \$60 million in a new Skilled Trades and Technology Centre, where students will receive trades training for the construction and manufacturing sectors.

A new Health and Wellness Centre at Brandon University will be a resource for students and faculty, as well as the entire Westman region.

At the start of this academic year, the Université de Saint-Boniface marked the first anniversary of its designation as Manitoba's newest university by launching a new logo and designating the UniverCITÉ district in the neighbourhood surrounding the campus.

At Assiniboine Community College, the new greenhouse will be a centre for training and applied research in environmental sustainability and food development.



We are also working with our post-secondary institutions to add the programming that Manitoba needs for the future, including: an expanded nurse practitioner program at U of M; the development of a ground-breaking urban and inner-city studies program at the U of W; new nursing programs at Université de Saint-Boniface; funding for the Bachelor of Technology in Construction Management at Red River College; and permanent funding for the first-in-Canada Masters of Psychiatric Nursing at BU.

The work to bring educational opportunities and the promise of a better future in the North continues. The mining academy is now open in Flin Flon. Housing and daycare for remote students is now available in The Pas. In recent months, regional centres of the University College of the North have opened in Swan River, Grand Rapids, Split Lake, Cross Lake, and Easterville. In the coming months, centres will open in Oxford House and Pukatawagan. This winter, the new and expanded UCN Oscar Lathlin Research Library will open in The Pas. UCN housing in Thompson will open in the coming year, and the new campus by early 2014.

### **Excellence in Education**

We have already introduced parent-friendly report cards, common in-service days, and legislation requiring schools to support young people who may not feel at home in the traditional high school classroom.

Lower student-teacher ratios mean better results for students. Last year our government committed to reducing class sizes for Kindergarten to Grade 3. In the first year we have partnered with school divisions to fund 79 more teachers and brought 176 more classrooms down to 20 students or less.

In the year ahead, we will take the next steps toward ensuring that Manitoba is in the top tier of education achievement, so that all young Manitobans receive the education they need to succeed.

- New parent-friendly curriculum tools will keep parents up to speed on what their children are learning, making it easier for parents to help their kids succeed in school.



- We will work with the Manitoba Teachers Society to launch a new “Talking with Teachers” tool to help teachers keep on top of the latest techniques by learning from and sharing with their colleagues.
- A new principal training and certification initiative will ensure all our schools have strong leadership.

All children deserve to attend a school where they feel welcome, safe and respected. We will introduce new measures to help parents, students and teachers fight bullying.

In the months ahead, we will announce final locations for new schools in Waverley West and Sage Creek, so that construction may proceed. As a result of legislation passed by our government, these and all new schools will include on-site child care centres.

Working with the Premier’s Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship, we will continue to pursue improved high-school graduation rates, and introduce new legislation in support of community schools.

Our government is continuing to strengthen the province’s early learning and child care system with investments in new spaces. In the coming year, more than a dozen new child care facilities will be opened throughout the province. We will also work with the sector to strengthen compensation to help attract and retain early childhood educators.

We have had great success with high school apprenticeships, increasing them by 800 per cent since 2000. We have expanded the use of mobile trades labs to rural, northern, and First Nations communities for pre-trades training. Earlier this year, we doubled the incentives for the private sector to hire more apprentices in rural areas. We’re also piloting innovative new on-line apprenticeship programs for key skilled areas needed in the workforce, to bring more apprentices and skilled trades to rural areas. In the coming year, we will take further action to increase apprenticeship opportunities:

- Upgrading rural high-school shop classrooms to apprenticeship standards;
- Working with school divisions to make it even easier for students to start an apprenticeship while in high school; and



- Beginning consultations with rural communities on new tools to help rural journeypersons start their own businesses.

## **Economic Development across Manitoba**

Manitoba has nearly 200 municipalities, a number little changed since a century ago. For decades, provincial and municipal governments have known that this historical model hinders growth and service delivery in rural communities. In 1997, the Government of Manitoba, after broad consultation, enshrined the threshold for becoming a municipality at 1,000 residents. Today, almost half of all municipalities do not meet that legal threshold.

Our government is committed to ensuring all municipalities have the capacity to provide essential infrastructure and services to their citizens – without which, they would be unable to meet modern challenges such as effective planning, emergency preparedness and economic development. In the year ahead, we will work with municipalities to begin a process of municipal amalgamations to ensure communities are able to meet the challenges of the next century.

This approach will lay the groundwork for new opportunities for rural economic development, population growth, and investment.

Many of Manitoba's highways and bridges were constructed in the middle of the last century. Sustained investment is required to renew and modernize the system. That is why we committed \$4 billion over ten years. At the end of this year, the sixth year of the commitment, over \$2.8 billion will have been invested – ahead of target to meet our commitment. This has allowed work on over 7,400 kilometers of roads and highways, and nearly 200 bridges.

In order to stretch highway funds further, find efficiencies, and reduce impacts on the environment, we are enlisting cutting-edge technologies like in-place recycling of existing road surfaces.

Our investments in the core highway network are bearing fruit, and Manitobans are driving on renewed roads in all corners of the province.



The Brandon East Access is now open to traffic, and with the completion of a paving project on Highway 68 near Lake Manitoba Narrows, this important trade route through the Interlake has been refurbished and modernized to allow for heavier loads.

In the coming year, work will continue on the renewal of the core highway network with more major projects on the Trans-Canada Highway. Work on other major routes like Highway 10 in western Manitoba, Highway 5 in the Parklands and Highway 6 through the Interlake to Manitoba's north will continue to link all areas of the province with a strong economic backbone.

Some 80 bridges were damaged by the flood of 2011, and rebuilding them remains a top priority.

We will introduce greater seasonal flexibility in the weights allowed in our transportation system to foster rural economic development and allow for greater efficiency in emergency situations.

Our government is also committed to assisting with the renewal of Winnipeg's transportation infrastructure, contributing significant funds to major projects like the expansion of the Chief Peguis Trail, the Osborne Street bridge, and the Disraeli overpass. We have made an initial contribution for the new Plessis Road underpass, and we look forward to continued partnerships that make such projects feasible.

In the coming months, our government will work with the City of Winnipeg to finalize joint priorities for new infrastructure investment, including roads, bridges, recreation and rapid transit, supported by renewed provincial capital funding.

Manitoba's agricultural producers have always been resilient in the face of change and uncertainty. In recent years, they have responded to challenges such as the flood, drought, and fluctuating commodity prices and input costs. We are finalizing the new Growing Forward 2 program with the Government of Canada to allow for new investment in innovation and technology on the farm and in our food industry. This will support the adoption of advanced technologies, the development of new products and expanded access to global market opportunities.



Churchill's arctic deep-water port positions it as the hub of a strategic Arctic Gateway that will contribute to sustainable prosperity both in northern Manitoba and in Nunavut. The federal-provincial Task Force on the Future of Churchill will report to the Prime Minister and the Premier before the end of the year. We are confident that this report will identify significant commercial and partnership opportunities to diversify traffic through the Port of Churchill and support the economic well-being and sustainability of the community.

Churchill will play a key role within a new northern prosperity initiative that our Government will be launching in the year ahead to create jobs and build infrastructure in partnership with Aboriginal and northern communities.

Our government is working with our partners on a strong economic future for Thompson. In the coming months, a new economic development fund will be established under *The Thompson Nickel Belt Sustainability Act*.

We continue to build a permanent network of roads on the East Side of Lake Winnipeg. Four new bridges are scheduled to be completed this winter, extending the winter road season and laying the ground work for a future all-season transportation network.

This year, the community access road to Bloodvein First Nation was successfully completed in partnership with the federal government, training and employing some 50 local residents.

Supporting Aboriginal entrepreneurship is a priority for our government. The Metis Economic Development Fund has been established in partnership with the Manitoba Metis Federation and is now accepting business proposals for funding. The First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, a partnership with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, has approved over 50 loans to First Nation businesses.

## **Trade and Business**

The global economy faces a number of major challenges, including slow growth in the US economy, continued fallout from the European debt crisis and the potential for a sharp contraction in the US economy following from the "fiscal cliff." In 2010, we identified the importance of diversifying our



export base. This strategy has been successful: over the last two years Manitoba exports to the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India, and China – have increased by more than 55 per cent.

CentrePort Canada will help Manitoba capitalize on our economic, transportation and geographic advantages, and seize new opportunities offered by the global economy.

CentrePort Way is expected to open in the year ahead. This new highway will open up inland port lands to further economic development and help move truck traffic more efficiently to Manitoba's international highways and trade corridors. These new efficiencies are projected to save truckers and motorists up to \$450 million over the next 25 years by reducing fuel consumption, time loss and accidents.

This year's successful Centrallia 2012 trade conference brought together some 700 business leaders from 30 countries, and officially launched Winnipeg's new bilingual World Trade Centre.

Due in large part to demographic changes, the turnover of business ownership is expected to reach record levels in the near future. In the year ahead, we will introduce new supports to ensure business owners are adequately prepared for business succession, including the creation of a Manitoba Business Succession Resource Centre.

We are working to improve services and reduce red tape for small business. Manitoba firms can now register for WCB online. We will continue to streamline by merging the Companies Office with our small business development programs, offering a full range of services to Manitoba entrepreneurs at a single point of contact.

### **The World is Coming to Manitoba**

In the past years, our government has worked with the private sector and community partners to make important investments in world-class amenities, from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, to the Investors Group Field, and the redevelopment of Assiniboine Park. And plans for the expansion of the Winnipeg Convention Centre were announced just days ago.



Private sector investments are also leading the way, from the new IKEA in west Winnipeg to the CentrePoint development downtown, to the new retail developments around Polo Park.

Our world-class amenities are already attracting world-class events: the FIFA Women's World Cup, the Junos and the Canada Summer Games are all coming to Manitoba in the years ahead.

Now it is time to let the world know that something special is happening in Manitoba. As leaders in the tourism industry have noted, now is the time to modernize our tourism promotion strategy. Our government will consolidate provincial tourism resources and work with industry to ensure consistent branding and positioning to take full advantage of the potential.

Our government is supporting the development of more affordable housing for our growing communities. We are well on our way to meeting the goals of our five-year plan of creating 1,500 new affordable and social housing units. In the year ahead, we will introduce new tools to help lower-income families achieve their goal of home ownership and to support the development of housing co-ops. We will also give municipalities innovative new tools to help them create more opportunities for affordable housing.

Surface parking lots have restricted development in downtown Winnipeg. Our government has used its parking lot at Carlton and York as the site of the Winnipeg Convention Centre expansion. MPI has begun work with a developer for the redevelopment of its two downtown surface parking lots.

This has been a historic year for rapid transit in Winnipeg. The first leg of the southwest corridor opened to the public. The province and the City of Winnipeg have funded a study to select a route to the University of Manitoba. We look forward to Winnipeg City Council selecting a route for the second phase, and we remain committed to funding one-third of the cost of this important project.

Last year, we opened our first Liquor Mart Express store at the James A. Richardson International Airport. In the coming year, new Liquor Mart Express locations will open in grocery stores in Winnipeg and Brandon. In the year ahead, we will do more to cut red tape for small businesses, increase consumer choice, and enhance social responsibility around liquor



and gaming. These steps will include making liquor permit applications for wedding socials available online.

### **Affordability: Protecting your pocketbook**

With a strong economy and low housing costs, Manitoba is one of the most affordable places to live.

As of this year, Manitoba families can rest assured they pay the lowest rate in the country for a basic utilities bundle made up of home heating, electricity and auto insurance. Our government has guaranteed this commitment in law.

As a result of this and other supports from our government -- as well as the Manitoba values of common sense and hard work -- Manitobans have among the lowest personal debt levels among Canadians, including the lowest per capita bank debt in the country.

In the year ahead, we will introduce new measures to keep life affordable for families and protect consumers, around new home construction, car sales, and cable bills.

Starting this month, as a result of legislation passed by our government, more Manitoba families will be able to make their homes more energy efficient and save on their energy bills. Manitoba Hydro's Pay As You Save (PAYS) financing program is the first such program in Canada.

### **Safe Communities, Stronger Families**

Supporting families and providing constructive alternatives for youth help make our communities safer and stronger.

In the year ahead, a new After School Leaders program will be launched to provide opportunities and mentorships for young people after school hours.

Our government has made historic investments in community policing and neighbourhood revitalization. This year we will work with the police and the community to launch an intensive crime-reduction strategy based on proven methods to reduce violent crime, starting in the William Whyte neighbourhood in Winnipeg's inner city.



New rules will strengthen roadside safety by setting reduced speed limits when passing first responders and other roadside vehicles, and by giving firefighters authority to direct traffic when necessary.

We are moving ahead on plans for a more sophisticated electronic case management system that will result in improved services for vulnerable children.

New tools will help workplace safety investigators and workers keep our workplaces safe.

Earlier this month the government of Manitoba, in partnership with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, began a public awareness campaign to combat domestic violence. This coincided with the release of a new multi-year domestic violence strategy.

For this holiday season, new rules will be in place to protect against impaired driving.

Earlier this month, our government and the Native Women's Association of Canada co-hosted a summit of provincial and territorial governments with the five National Aboriginal Organizations to address the national tragedy of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Our efforts to engage the federal government on this vital issue and help move forward on effective nation-wide policies will continue.

Work has already been done to improve accessibility legislation in Manitoba to help ensure Manitobans with disabilities have better access to public buildings. We have brought together parties never before involved. There is a broad consensus emerging and we need to share responsibility and move forward. We will bring forward legislation in the coming year.

## **Water and the Environment**

This June, our government released Tomorrow Now: Manitoba's Green Plan. Its goal is to make Manitoba one of the most sustainable places to live and grow our green economy.

Manitobans love and value their parks. Our government has made record investments in park improvements and amenities, such as a new boardwalk at Grand Beach, new yurts, and new showers at some of our



busiest campgrounds. We will build on this progress, with new investments to rejuvenate and modernize some of our most popular park destinations, as well as create new parks.

In the year ahead, we will launch a new program to support municipal and commercial composting programs. New provincial funding will allow Brandon to offer city-wide curb-side composting, a Manitoba first.

Among the most critical environmental challenges facing Manitoba is the health of Lake Winnipeg. The record flooding of last year focused our attention on the importance of surface-water management. Tomorrow, nearly 200 representatives will gather in Winnipeg to move forward on a comprehensive new surface-water management strategy for Manitoba that will help preserve and protect Lake Winnipeg.

Work is underway to build new state-of-the-art waste water treatment plants in partnership with the City of Winnipeg. Modernizing the south and north end plants will address the largest single source of phosphorous entering our lake.

Our government recognizes the importance that scientific research must play in guiding actions to save Lake Winnipeg. Manitoba is supporting new research projects, including investigations into priority areas for wetland conservation and restoration, tracking phosphorous release from flood-prone areas, and aquatic risks from toxic algae.

The Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage project is the largest protected area of southern intact boreal forest in North America. It safeguards endangered species, vital wetlands and remarkable indigenous cultures. This year the bid to inscribe it as a UNESCO World Heritage Site was submitted by the federal government. We will continue to support a positive outcome for what could be the province's first World Heritage Site.

Our efforts to protect the east side of Lake Winnipeg directly helps the lake by protecting critical sources of clean water.

Manitobans know we all have a part to play to fight climate change. We know it is necessary to determine the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the province to identify the right approaches to reduce emissions. New reporting mechanisms for these emitters will be introduced.



Manitoba has had wildlife management areas for over 50 years. As we begin the next 50 years, a new initiative will promote and facilitate hunters' contributions to wildlife enhancement.

This year, we reached an historic agreement with the Manitoba Metis Federation to recognize Metis harvesting rights and conservation responsibilities.

Hydro energy is key to a prosperous future for Manitoba. In the past year, we turned on Wuskwatim, Manitoba's first new dam in a generation. In the days ahead we will release a Clean Energy Strategy that will consolidate Manitoba's position as a North American leader, and set a course to ensure reliable, affordable energy for future generations.

The Winnipeg Consensus brought together industry, environmental organizations, and government to begin a national energy dialogue. With Manitoba co-chairing the Council of the Federation's working group on a Canadian Energy Strategy, our province is proud to show national leadership as we move toward a clean energy future.

I trust that Divine Providence will guide your deliberations in the best interests of all our citizens.